



Aruba's International Half Marathon attracted runners from near and far

They came to run; and they came to win. There was a great deal of the “thrill of victory,” but little of the “agony of defeat,” as crossing the finish line, even if you were dead last like Rene van Putten, it was still an accomplishment to be proud of. This year, the twenty-second Half Marathon which has been sponsored by the Alhambra Casino since it was constructed saw a record inscription of 460 runners/walkers from as near as Aruba and as far as Ecuador and all over the U.S. and Canada. There were double the participants from last year's race, which had also set a new record.

Some interesting facts; though there were only a very few entrants from Venezuela they took the top two spots; Carlos Olivares was #1 across the finish line with a time of 1:13:17 and Yolexa Arthona took first place in the women's division with a time of 1:28:26. Shariska Dirks, second place winner in the women's division with a time of 1:38:46, was also the first Aruban to cross the finish line.

Some more interesting highlights; women from the U.S. swept the 50+ category, Dorothy Cullinan of Massachusetts returned to Aruba to repeat her first place victory of last year, as did Peg Parks of Connecticut, who again took second place along side Dorothy. This year they were joined by Deb Schilling of Massachusetts who placed third after participating in the past, and for the first time took home a trophy. Angel Maldonado of Puerto Rico ventured to Aruba for the first time, with his wife and trainer Olga, something he has dreamed of doing for years, and took first place in the Men's ages 50-54 with a time of 1:34:22, quite a distance ahead of the others in his division.

The delegation from Curaçao was thrilled with their multiple victories, taking the top five spots in the Men's walking results. William van Heineken, Elfried Laker, Sherwin Martis, Erquille Wawoe and Elfried Emelina did their island and compatriots proud.

Aruba has also a great deal to be proud of in the performance of the island's athletes, who took the majority of the first place trophies in various divisions. The fact that this event has grown so greatly in participation and prestige as to attract runners and walkers from so many countries to compete in an atmosphere of camaraderie and accomplishment is a great achievement. Years of achievement were also honored with a plaque presented to Rudy Leysner for devoting forty years of his life to IDFRE and the promotion of the sport of running. He retired this year from his participation with the organization.

Dochi Lee representing the Ministry of Culture, and Jerry Amato, Operations Manager of the Alhambra Casino were pleased to participate in awarding all the athletes that gathered so early before dawn to join in this event, which continues to grow in popularity internationally, as well as on the island.

Spirits were high on the brilliantly sunny Sunday morning that greeted the runners as they witnessed the sunrise making their way from the Joe Laveist Ballpark in San Nicolas to cross the finish line at the Alhambra Casino. Nourishment and a massage awaited them to ease the aches and pains of exertion, and the camaraderie of sportsmen and sportswomen. Everyone appeared to enjoy the event completely, whether they returned home with a trophy or not. The morning was the embodiment of sportsmanship and the pride felt by individuals not only for winning, but for simply making the effort and succeeding to cross the finish line.